

Hispaniola

by

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INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Pages of a HISTORY BOOK flash before our eyes. A child's hand turns them, looking for a chapter, revealing HEADINGS of different HISTORY LESSONS, DRAWINGS, DIAGRAMS, and TIME LINES OF EVENTS, and the VOICE of a young female teacher:

YOUNG FEMALE TEACHER (O.S.)

This is a subject dear to the heart of all Dominicans, our independence. Turn to chapter five... After years of neglect by the Spanish crown, the island known to the Spanish as Hispaniola and to the native Indians as Quisqueya or Ayiti, and the Haitians on the French side of the island having gained their independence from France and under their dictator Toussaint Louverture took advantage of the situation and invaded our side of the island in 1822.

Big BROWN EYES look at the teacher with intensity, they belong to ANTONIO OVALLE, an eight year old boy with preppy looks and straight long brown hair that almost covers his eyes. He looks up at the petite YOUNG FEMALE TEACHER in conservative attire:

YOUNG FEMALE TEACHER

The Haitians ruled the Spanish side of the island, our side, for 22 years, until we expelled them in 1844, thanks to whom?

All hands are raised, a bit unusual. She points to Antonio.

ANTONIO

Juan Pablo Duarte!

YOUNG FEMALE TEACHER

I see that you're up to speed on this, as well as nine million other Dominicans.

The other kids laugh.

INT. MOVING CAR - DAY

MINERVA, a young woman in her early thirties is at the wheel of a BMW. Antonio rides next to her.

MINERVA

So how was school today?

ANTONIO

We learned about our independence from Spain and Haiti. The teacher told us about how the Haitians are slowly invading again.

This hits a nerve for Minerva.

MINERVA

What? She got carried away. They come here because there's no work in their country. They're starving, and not because they want to invade anything. I should speak with her...

ANTONIO

But she said is in the history books.

MINERVA

They don't always tell the truth.

EXT. ANTONIO'S HOUSE - DAY

The BMW pulls over in front of an Iron gate. Antonio looks to his left: CONSTRUCTION SITE right across the street from his house where HAITIAN WORKERS sweat under the blistering Caribbean sun. He notices a HAITIAN BOY his own age and his MOTHER cooking food on a makeshift stove or *anafe*.

ANTONIO

Mom, how about those guys..
(pointing at the Haitians)
Are they invading our side of the island too?

Minerva disagrees, smiling and shaking her head.

INT. ANTONIO'S HOUSE - DAY

The OVALLE family sits around the dining room table finishing a typical Dominican *comida* or lunch. GABINA, a made in her early twenties sets a pitcher of lemonade on the table and takes some dishes away. JUAN, a handsome man in his early forties, dress shirt and tie, sips on his espresso.

JUAN

I'm sorry honey...
 (looking at Minerva)
 But I have to go back to the office
 in a few minutes... It's just that
 the president wants us to pass this
 new law and we're working like mad
 to have it passed this Friday...

MINERVA

(smiles)
 Don't worry, I'm used to it by now.

Juan gets up, and kisses Antonio on the forehead and kisses his wife goodbye. Walking out:

JUAN

Don't let him play outside, OK?
 There's been too many kidnappings
 recently around this area.

EXT. ANTONIO'S HOUSE - DAY

Antonio uses the floor of the *galeria* or VERANDA as his make-shift desk, doing his homework. Gabina watches him while reading a fashion magazine.

Antonio closes his book. He is done with homework. As he gathers his things he eyes curiously wander to the construction site across the street.

Now the Haitian workers gather around the *anafe* to be fed by CECILE, a Haitian woman, 30s, who looks to be more like in her forties because of the hardships she's been through. She serves the food to the workers in plates, tin cups, or on anything that would hold the rice and beans. PIERRE, a Haitian boy about Antonio's age sits close to Cecile while eating and next to him sits a MAN who may be his father.

EXT. ANTONIO'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - LATER

Antonio races back to the fence of his house wearing a baseball mitt on one hand. He jumps, but can't reach the ball that goes over his head and hits the fence.

Gabina stands by the porch on the other side wearing another mitt, cracking up.

GABINA

You got to jump like Jose Reyes!

Antonio is having a ball, just happy to have someone to play with. As he goes for the ball on the floor and looks up, and his eyes meet:

A BIG BLACK SUV, that comes out of nowhere, coming to a halt in front of the construction site, startling the workers.

GABINA (V.O.)

Antonio throw me the ball!

But Antonio is more interested on what's going on in front of him.

A ROBUST MAN in his late forties, wearing a white GUAYABERA and a Licey (local baseball team) cap jumps out of the SUV. He stands 5'5" tall, a bit small for the vehicle he drives.

The Robust Man, who's real name is FELUCHO walks up to the workers, and they all stop eating and pay attention. The man next to the child gets up from a crate where he is sitting.

FELUCHO

Don't mind me. Just keep doing what you're doing. But I tell you, at this pace we won't finish this dam house this summer, but more like next year.

JEAN-MICHEL, the Haitian man next to the child, early forties, walks up to him.

JEAN-MICHEL

(Spanish with Haitian
French Creole accent)

Man, we be working all day, all night, and the...

FELUCHO

...I don't care. You lazy bums better work faster or they'll be consequences. Stop taking long lunch brakes, you're not on a vacation or a cruise amigo, wake the fuck up. The faster you work, the faster you get paid.

(walking back to his SUV)

You got another eight weeks.

(to himself, but loud
enough)

I wish they would deport your ass, lazy assholes.

And with that Felucho jumps back on his SUV and disappears from sight, and as he does...

A YOUNG HAITIAN WORKER, clearly furious, starts for Jean-Michel.

YOUNG HAITIAN WORKER
(In French Creole)
Why do you take this shit from him?

JEAN-MICHEL
My friend, this is not my homeland.
I have no papers. What do you want
me to do?
(looking at Cecile and
Pierre)
Put my family at risk?

YOUNG HAITIAN WORKER
(in French Creole)
Remember our motto, the unity makes
the strength. I don't trust that
guy... you know what they do when
they owe you two months salary like
he owes now...

JEAN-MICHEL
I know, I know... but I'm telling
you he's not that kinds, I know him
better. He probably had a bad day.

Antonio now turns his head.

GABINA (O.S.)
Are you playing or what.

As he looks up Antonio sees that she's right in from of him. Antonio now runs back in the opposite direction, standing where Gabina was originally, in front of the house.

He throws the ball, she really doesn't catch it, but barely stops the ball with mitt. Antonio laughs. Gabina throws it back at him and they go back and forth a couple of times when...

Antonio miscalculates his own strength and hurls it back at Gabina with so much power that it goes over the front yard fence and...

The BALL lands at Pierre's feet, startling him and his mom. Pierre immediately grabs the ball and is in complete awe.

This is the first time that his hands have held or have even seen what a real baseball looks like.

PIERRE'S EYES

Widen as he holds the ball, and he flashes a great smile, the first in a couple of hard months.

Cecile looks at Pierre, a bit concerned, while the other workers don't notice and continue their work...

Antonio and Pierre's eyes meet. Without hesitating Pierre throws the ball back over the fence and Antonio, taking a couple steps back, catches it.

A big smile on his face, a form of thanks. He looks back at Gabina who gestures for him to throw the ball back at her, but Antonio turns around and throws the ball back at...

Pierre, who now stands closer to the fence. Pierre catches it without any problem, looks like he's been playing with the rag ball for a while. Happy, Pierre throws it right back at Antonio, who's just can't believe that Pierre can catch that well.

A game of catch develops over the fence. Gabina, a bit concern goes over to Antonio.

On the other side Cecile sees the action and:

CECILE
(in French Creole)
Pierre come back here!

PIERRE
(in French Creole)
But I'm playing mom. Look!

And he throws the ball back at Antonio who misses this time, making Pierre laugh even more.

GABINA (O.S.)
So don't you want to play with me
anymore.

Antonio looks at Gabina as he heads for a metal door next to the main gate.

GABINA
Where do you think you're going?

And Antonio opens the door and is now face to face with Pierre. Pierre is frozen.

Antonio gestures him to come inside, throwing the ball in the air mimicking a game of catch. Pierre takes a few steps.

At this point Gabina is next to Antonio and a frightened Cecile walks over to Pierre. Cecile talks to Pierre in French Creole and the rest in Spanish with a Creole accent.

CECILE

Pierre, leave those people alone.

Pierre looks at his mother but doesn't move an inch.

ANTONIO

(looking at Gabina)

Let him come in. He won't bite you.

Gabina knows how miserable Antonio has been without a playing partner, not having any brothers and sisters, and not being able to go outside. Gabina addresses Cecile in Spanish:

GABINA

Alright. Ma'am is alright, let the boy play inside.

PIERRE

You see mom, let me play... they're nice people.

CECILE

I'm sorry senorita, you must understand how kids are, Pierre didn't mean to bother anyone.

(pulling Pierre by a hand)

Come on.

GABINA

It's alright, the boy here wants to play with him too...

Cecile lets go of Pierre's arm and in a flash he runs after Antonio inside the gates of the house and into the front yard.

CECILE

Alright, thank you. Just send him back when your boy is ready for supper.

GABINA

Don't worry.

MONTAGE

Antonio and Pierre play a game of catch on the front yard.

Pierre at bat, Antonio throws a pitch... balls comes down fast, Pierre swings and connects..

Antonio runs back but can't catch it... Pierre runs the bases, shouting something in Creole, happy.

THE CITY OF SANTO DOMINGO FROM ABOVE, THE SUN BURNS BRIGHT. GRADUALLY THE SUN GOES DOWN, NIGHT TIME COMES, AND THE SUN COMES UP AGAIN, WHITE CLOUDS INVADE THE BLUE CARIBBEAN SKIES

Antonio gives Pierre some batting clinics, things he learned in the little leagues. Teaching him how to hold the bat, saying things in Spanish that Pierre only half understands. But it doesn't matter, and as Antonio explains, he spits back his own version in Creole.

ANTONIO

Look, you hold the bat like this.
Bat, this is called a bat.

PIERRE

(in French Creole)
I know, I know. I may not know
Spanish, but I'm not slow.
(smiles)
What else?

ANTONIO

(showing Pierre the
stance)
And you stand like this.

PIERRE IS NOW AT BAT

And Antonio throws a pitch, Pierre connects, Antonio runs back to catch the ball....

ANTONIO

(to himself, running)
Caramba, I'm teaching him too well.

PIERRE WITH A PLATE OF FOOD EATING WITH HIS MOTHER, FATHER AND THE WORKERS.

He barely finishes and runs to Antonio's house. Pierre keeps going, not paying attention to mom. Food doesn't go to waste as one of the Haitian workers swiftly grabs the leftovers.

PIERRE AND ANTONIO PLAY

Antonio at bat. Pierre, wearing Antonio's mitt, throws a mean fast ball, too hard for his famine-plagued frame. Antonio swings and misses the ball!

Pierre laughs. Antonio takes a better stance and aims with his bat, another throw, this time he connects... Pierre runs back but, stops dead on his tracks, frozen...

A WHITE SUV comes in through the gate, driven by Juan, Antonio's dad, in suit and tie.

Juan sees Pierre, frozen as if he's seen a ghost. Antonio runs over to the SUV as his dad gets off.

ANTONIO

Papi, look we're playing baseball
and...

JUAN

Who the hell is this boy?
(to Pierre)
Come on get out of here.

ANTONIO

He's my friend Pierre, and he
(points to the
construction)
lives over there, and he...

JUAN

I don't care, you can't be mixing
with these people...
(walking to Pierre)
Out of here, beat it nigger!

Cecile notices the commotion going on accross the street, as does Jean-Michel, both run over Antonio's house...

JEAN-MICHEL

See woman, what did I tell you?

A frightened Pierre runs for dear life, smack into his parents on the other side of the gate....

JEAN-MICHEL

(in Spanish)
I'm sorry sir, is he bothering
anyone!

JUAN

You guys should know your place. I
don't want to see your kid inside
my house...

JEAN-MICHEL

(in Spanish)

Sir, he was just playing with your boy.

JUAN

I don't care. I'm gonna have a talk with my son and...

ANTONIO

But dad, Pierre is just...

JUAN

Who? Shut up and go inside. I'm gonna have a talk with you.

Antonio, runs back into the house, fighting his tears, while his eyes connects with Pierre's.

JEAN-MICHEL

(now in French Creole)

Your boy and my boy were just playing, they wanted to be friends. To play ball... That's alright, because I know that someday after you and I are long gone, things will be different, I have faith that things are going to change, that your kind and my kind will be friends again, I have faith...

And with that the family goes back to the construction site. Juan just stares back with hatred.

The BMW driven by Minerva, Antonio's mother pulls in. She storms out. Juan walks to the house, doesn't looking back...

MINERVA

Is everything alright?

JUAN

This is all your fault.

INT. ANTONIO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Antonio's family having dinner. You could hear a pin drop.

EXT. ANTONIO'S HOUSE - LATER

Antonio sneaks out through a door in the backyard, helped by Gabina, who acts as a look out. Gabina gestures him to go.

Antonio crosses the deserted street, only a stray dog hangs around. He sneaks around the construction site and to the back where he sees Cecile rocking Pierre in her arms, telling him a story in French Creole, while Jean-Michel smokes, lost in his thoughts. They gather around the ashes of the grill.

A sound is heard. They are startled. Jean-Michel gets up and looks towards the bushes.

JEAN-MICHEL

Who's there?

Antonio's face emerges from the bushes, BASEBALL MITT in hand. Jean-Michel expression changes. Upset or frightened?

JEAN-MICHEL

Out of here boy, I want no trouble.

Cecile pulls Jean-Michel by the arm. Pierre is already walking up to Antonio. Antonio hands him the mitt, Pierre hesitates, but takes it, and opens it, revealing a BASEBALL inside the mitt.

ANTONIO

It's for you. I wanted to tell you that we're friends. I'm your friend, no matter what my stupid dad says. We'll always have our friendship, and baseball.

And with that he disappears into the bushes, leaving everyone perplexed, including Pierre, who doesn't know whether to laugh or cry.

EXT. SANTO DOMINGO - DAY

A new day. The sun bathes the city in an orange glow.

EXT. ANTONIO'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Antonio's family is in the front yard. Juan takes off in his SUV. Antonio, looking sad walks to his mom BMW. Gabina gestures him to wait, and hands him his superhero lunch box, but as he is about to get into his mom's car they all hear a noise of approaching cars, many cars, and they turn to see...

Half a dozen POLICE CARS, including VANS and a SWAT vehicle. Swat operatives crawl out like roaches in all directions, wearing black swat attire with the sign on their back that reads in Spanish "Inmigracion".

With a tremendous show of noise and force they quickly gain control of the place, and surround the house. Two WOMEN step out of the Van with caution wearing CONANI uniforms. Screams are heard inside as the swat team breaks down doors and like barking dogs drag everyone one out like animals, including Cecile, Pierre and Jean-Michel, and a few workers.

Cecile screams like a mad woman as her child is ripped from her arms by the two CONANI (Child Services) women... Jean-Michel tries to intervene and is hit hard by the BUTT OF A RIFLE.. falling hard on the floor as he grabs his forehead, blood flows... Other workers try to protest or run... only to be met by the BUTT OF RIFLES AND MACHINE GUNS cracking their skulls with an unimaginable brutality.

On the other side, Gabina, Antonio and his mom's jaws drop to the floor. Minerva tries to shield her son from the spectacle covering his eyes, but he pushes her and runs to the front gate to find out the fate of his friend...

Pierre, whose heartrending cries can be heard for blocks, doesn't let go of the mitt and ball, holding it tight to his chest.

All the workers including Jean-Michele and Cecile, who has to be held by two cops, are thrown into waiting vans like CATTLE. Pierre is put into the van, and quickly runs to the back window to look for his mom, tears steaming down his face.... As quickly as they came all the cars disappear. The last one to leave is the van carrying Pierre who looks out of the back widow, a river of tears... His eyes find the eyes of...

Antonio on the other side, holds on to the bars of the gate, teary eye and shouting the words "NO" so many times... seeing his friend being taken away...

ANTONIO'S P.O.V.:

Pierre becomes smaller and smaller, as the van pulls away, crying, holding on to his sole possessions in this world, his mitt and baseball.

THE END